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ABSTRACT

Experience shows that mentoring has a positive effect on new teachers' professional lives. Quality induction programs promote greater teacher retention, breaking the cycle of attrition, which saves money for school districts and ensures that teacher shortages do not dictate hiring policy. These benefits are felt most in school districts with socioeconomically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students. Mentors often find themselves revitalized by the experience of passing their knowledge on to a new generation of teachers. Mentoring helps transform the teaching profession from one of isolation and high turnover to one of collaboration, continuity, and community. Not all good teachers make good mentors, and mentor selection must be done carefully. Mentoring requires the ability to work with adults, collaborate, and articulate a set of teaching skills. Mentor training programs should encourage reflection and run throughout the year. Successful induction programs recognize that mentoring is an energy-consuming job, requiring preparation and professional development time. Quality induction systems require adequate financial support and operate best when mentors and teachers collaborate on the same goals and share accountability. New teachers must learn to collaborate within the professional community and among peers. The basis of the mentor-novice interaction is a formative assessment process. Research is being conducted and analyzed to determine the impact of induction on teacher retention. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

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Launching the Next Generation of Teachers Through Quality Induction

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The Cycle of Teacher Attrition

Over the next decade, more than two million new teachers will find themselves facing a full classroom on their first day, charged with the mission of transforming it into a learning community. Most will be full of enthusiasm, bringing years of training and a long-held sense that their new profession is among society's most important. Education is a career that many of these new teachers feel chosen for, a calling they have had since childhood. Some will feel a chill go down their spine when they hear the word "teacher."

Unfortunately, for far too many new teachers reality does not live up to these high expectations.[i] As the only adults in their classrooms, they feel isolated from their fellow educators. They are overwhelmed by administrative tasks. They have to digest complex curriculum requirements while learning students' individual names and needs. In short, they find themselves doing two jobs at once: being a teacher and learning to teach.

As their challenges mount, many of these new teachers put their higher aspirations on hold, struggling simply to survive from one day to the next. And even so, many will not in fact survive. Current national retention data estimate the new teacher attrition rate at nearly 40 percent after four years.[ii]

The loss of these teachers takes an enormous toll on the educational system. New teachers must be constantly recruited to fill the gaps they leave behind, exacting a financial burden. But far worse is the educational cost of teacher attrition. Every teacher who leaves after only a few years takes with them vital classroom experience, and represents a missed opportunity to establish lasting relationships between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and among teaching professionals.

The loss of new teachers also has a follow-on effect, as replacement teachers are recruited in haste to meet class-size requirements. Often, these emergency hires lack adequate training. In some large urban cities as many as 50 percent of their new hires are on qualification waivers of some kind. Expected to complete their credentials even as they struggle to acquire real-life teaching experience, these replacement teachers' first years prove still more challenging, and the chances of them living up to their aspirations as educators are even lower. As each new generation of teachers face greater difficulties, the stage is set for a self-perpetuating cycle of attrition. Taxpayers, new teachers and, most importantly, students all bear the cost of this cycle.

In most states, the educational and financial burdens of this attrition fall disproportionately upon the districts and students least able to afford them. Schools in which language barriers and cultural diversity present special challenges tend to experience the worst rates of attrition.[iii] (As a result, schools serving minorities often have a disproportionate number of unqualified teachers, up to ten times higher than the national average.) This means that a high percentage of teachers coming into the profession will find themselves recruited into the most challenging situations. Thus, students who are most at risk will find themselves in classrooms with teachers who have the least experience, possessing the least ability to cope with their special needs. Again, the stage is set to create a cycle of attrition, one in which the

enthusiasm and commitment of young teachers is used up and burned out before it has a chance to make a real contribution to students' lives.

Breaking the Cycle

It's easy to forget what it was like to be a beginning teacher, having to acquire curriculum knowledge and classroom strategies while at the same time balancing practical concerns with lofty ideals. Approaching the problem of teacher retention, it is essential to ask one question:

- If I were starting my career today, what would most help me develop into an outstanding, caring and accomplished teacher?

One answer stands out among all the rest: I can only imagine how much better a teacher I would have been that first year if I'd had a mentor.

Student teaching and preservice training are necessary steps in creating competent and qualified teaching professionals, but they are not enough. Mentors have an impact on new teachers in ways that no amount of training can. The real-life classroom presents questions that only real-life experience can answer. Mentors help provide those answers. They give practical, concrete advice; pose important questions to prompt reflection; model teaching techniques in the classroom; observe and offer feedback; and offer another point of view at a time when it's easy to lose all perspective. Their experience helps the novice teacher balance professional development with day-to-day details.

Mentors also decrease the isolation of the new teacher. Their emotional support is essential when the obstacles seem too great, and allows the novice to take risks and grow while still keeping the classroom functioning. By developing a specific plan for each new teacher and setting specific performance goals to improve teaching practice, mentors create an environment based on collaboration, exchange of ideas, and professionalism. And, by making them a part of a supportive community of educators, mentors help keep alive the enthusiasm and sense of mission that brought new teachers into the profession in the first place.

A successful mentoring program can change the face of that first year of teaching.[iv] Take this quote from a new teacher at the end of her first year: "My advisor kind of walked me through the year. She was always there to listen to my ideas, my reflections. I never felt that I was alone, even when she wasn't in the room, because I knew that I had daily access to a person who would listen and respond to my ideas. I trusted her to give me honest feedback on how successfully a strategy worked…she met whatever needs I had."

History

In the mid-1980s, California found itself facing a crisis, one caused primarily by exceptionally low rates of teacher retention. The problems that would eventually visit the

rest of the country came early to California, where the student population was increasing in size as well as becoming more diverse. At the same time the state and many districts were adopting far more complex curricula. Finding, and, more importantly, retaining qualified teachers had become almost impossible for many rural and urban districts.

The new teachers who entered this challenging situation were thrown into the classroom with little support beyond their preservice training. Turnover rates were high, particularly among minority teachers. Although a paucity of research on teacher induction had been published at the time, it was obvious to many of us that the "sink or swim" method had failed.

As the need to change the system became clear, and state funding became available, I was able to oversee the creation of a new program for teacher induction. Our design process brought together the entire community of educators: district administrators, principals, union representatives, experienced teachers, new teachers, and Education Department faculty from the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). Together, in 1988, we created a comprehensive new teacher support program, with mentoring at its core. The Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP), led by UCSC in partnership with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education and all school districts in the area, began its work with 42 elementary teachers. Exemplary teachers, released full time, acted as mentors, providing individualized support.

After the initial first three years, funding lapsed, but the success of the statewide effort (California New Teacher Project) and the SCNTP served as models for statewide reform. In 1992, California policy makers enacted SB 1422, which implemented Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs, providing funding for mentor-based programs throughout the state. These BTSA programs ultimately have constituted a redesign of the state's credentialing process. The final stages in teacher credentialing, which were previously administered by institutions of higher learning, are now integrated into a comprehensive induction system with mentoring at its core. There are currently 150 BTSA programs in California. In short, the law now assures that all new teachers in California will receive mentoring on their way to becoming fully credentialed teachers.

In 2000, the SCNTP expanded to include the Silicon Valley New Teacher Project, and now serves 1,000 new teachers in 30 districts. Since 1988 the SCNTP has worked with over 9,000 K-12 new teachers.

Five years ago, the New Teacher Center at UCSC became the latest outgrowth of the process that began in 1988. The Center's mission is to give national scope to this work by researching, designing, and advocating high quality induction programs for new teachers. The SCNTP model is being implemented in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District in North Carolina, Districts 20 and 26 of the New York City public school system, and the Dorchester County public school system in Maryland. We are also collaborating with districts in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

So, what has this experience taught us about the essential components of an effective induction program and the role of mentors?

Mentor Role and Selection

Too often, mentoring programs are conceived as "buddy systems," in which experienced educators are paired with new teachers on an informal basis. In the buddy system model, mentors are neither trained for their new role nor given time to carry out its demands. In other words, new mentors are treated pretty much as new teachers were, allowed to sink or swim, armed with only intuition and good intentions to keep themselves afloat.

Effective induction programs conceive the role of mentor as "teacher of teachers." Mentors use their expertise to help support beginning teacher development in ways that are responsive to the needs of new teachers. This work is complex and different from teaching students. To have a real impact, induction programs must provide the same kind of support to mentors that the mentors are in turn providing to new teachers.[v] Like novice teachers, new mentors need training, guidance, and the support of the entire community of educators. Even exemplary teachers will need to learn new skills in order to effectively pass on their wealth of experience and wisdom.

Not all good teachers make good mentors. Of course, every mentor must have exemplary professional ability – a full knowledge of standards, curriculum, and student assessment. Mentors are required to have taught a minimum of seven years. But mentors must also demonstrate an ability to learn a new set of skills: teaching adults.

At the New Teacher Center (NTC), we look for veteran teachers who have already developed their interpersonal skills. Experience with coaching, facilitating groups, and other collaborative models is an important indicator of likely success as a mentor. Successful mentors will have keen observational skills, excellent communication skills, and of course patience, enthusiasm, and a love of all kinds of learning.

They also have to possess a commitment to collaboration. They have to be able to build relationships, both with individuals and among groups. And, because so many new teachers are placed in schools that are culturally diverse often having a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL), the NTC pays special attention to hiring mentors who have experience working with diverse student populations. In districts in which a high percentage of students are ELL, ideally all new teachers are paired with mentors who have expertise in first and second language acquisition, literacy, and English language development.

Mentor Training

Mentoring requires new abilities: working with adults, collaboration, and, often most complex, being able to articulate the set of teaching skills that they work with every day. Not all good teachers know how they teach; they experience their teaching practice as

second nature. A good mentoring program makes sure they have the time and training to reflect on their practice. The strongest induction programs will expend time and resources to prepare mentors for their new role as communicators of their knowledge and experience. Training mentors is as important as training the novice teachers they will serve.

In the SCNTP, prior to the beginning of the school year, mentor trainees participate in at least two days of initial training called "Foundations in Mentoring." The training covers these four core areas:

- Role of the new teacher mentor
- Developing an effective mentoring relationship
- Identifying new teacher needs
- Mentoring conversations
- Formative assessment for new teachers

Training doesn't end when the school year begins, however. Throughout the year, mentors receive additional professional development including a two-day coaching and observation training. This training focuses on techniques for observing new teachers, collecting classroom performance data, and using data to inform instruction. Mentors also attend weekly forums that give them the opportunity to further develop their mentoring skills, work collaboratively, and share insights, challenges and successes. In this learning community mentors develop a shared vision of good teaching, calibrate their classroom observations using videos, and share and analyze evidence of their work. In districts with well-established programs, these forums can help new mentors seek the guidance of those with more experience.

During the first year that a veteran teacher is working as a mentor, the following subjects can be covered to increase a new mentor's grasp on his or her new role:

- Professional teaching standards
- NTC Formative Assessment System
- Lesson planning in content areas
- Analyzing student work
- Differentiating instruction
- Collecting classroom data
- Analyzing classroom data
- Data-based revision of practice
- Effective strategies for working with English language learners
- Literacy instruction

In the second year of a program, a new set of topics is introduced in mentor training, helping mentors to expand their roles. As experienced mentors, they are now leaders in the process of creating a vibrant, dynamic, and sustainable program. The following subjects are covered as the school year progresses:

- Mentor professional growth
- Planning for year-two mentoring
- Advanced coaching skills
- Promoting new teacher resiliency
- Tailoring support to second-year teachers
- Content specific pedagogy
- Developing mentor leadership skills
- Building school-site leaning communities
- Becoming a mentor trainer
- Planning for project continuation: goals and implementation plan
- Program evaluation

Many of these second-year topics give mentors a forum to express their concerns, and offer the leadership of the mentoring program an opportunity to assess its results informally. A healthy induction system is constantly gathering feedback, using the creativity and experiences of its participants to reshape itself from year to year. Programs that encourage and respond to participant feedback are more likely to sustain themselves over the long term.

Commitment to Quality Induction

Successful induction programs recognize that mentoring is an energy-consuming job, requiring the same kinds of time for preparation and professional development as full-time teaching. Ideally, new teachers should have a mentor in their classroom for at least two hours each week, to perform demonstration lessons in the classroom, observe the novice teaching, assist with curriculum development, as well as classroom management and other on-the-job skills. In some districts, to meet this time commitment mentors are released from their classroom fulltime.

Of course, not every district can afford to implement mentoring as a full-time job. Some mentors will have to combine classroom teaching with their mentoring duties. Experience has shown, however, that it is very difficult for teachers to spend the time and effort necessary for successful mentoring without some adjustment in scheduling. As much as possible, they should be teaching the same subjects at the same grade levels. This matching of content area and grade level saves the mentor valuable time, and builds opportunities for deeper collaboration.

The caseload for each mentor can be variable, depending on their experience, classroom duties, and other support available to new teachers in the district. However, even experienced, full-time mentors should ideally work with no more than 15 novice teachers at once. (With two hours of classroom work per novice per week, this already represents six hours a day of classroom observation, assistance, and modeling.) Part-time mentors, of course, cannot afford to spread themselves this thin. Without substantive weekly contact, the capacity of a mentor to contribute is greatly reduced. Simply knowing that a mentor will be in their classroom once a week can sustain a beginning teacher facing daily challenges.

Acquiring the new skills and techniques of mentoring also requires a time commitment of a broader sort. In many SCNTP induction programs, mentors work with novice teachers for as long as three years before moving back into teaching or onto the next phase in their career. This extended period gives them a chance to adapt fully to their new leadership role. Just as teachers need time to gain their footing, so do mentors.

Obviously, to implement a program with these levels of support requires resources. A system of quality teacher induction costs money. But compared with the financial expense (and educational cost) of recruiting and training replacements, the cost of effective induction is relatively low. In California, under BTSA, the state provides nearly $3,500 for each new teacher, and districts contribute (ideally) another $2,000. Levels of between $5,000 and $6,000 per teacher have proven adequate for a top-flight system of induction.

With these realities in mind, it is very important that when states mandate induction programs, they also provide adequate funding to help districts meet these mandates. Mentoring is not a cost-free magic bullet to save our schools. It is a proven and effective system that requires a serious commitment of resources at both the state and district levels.

Assessment and Accountability

Induction systems operate best when both mentors and new teachers are working collaboratively toward the same goals. Professional teaching standards should be clearly defined, well articulated, and consistent statewide. In California, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)[vi] provide a framework, identifying and categorizing a set of abilities and practices that every teacher should master.

But published, statewide standards are only the beginning of a framework for teacher growth and development. The NTC has embedded these standards in its Formative Assessment System (FAS). The FAS helps structure the interactions between mentors and beginning teachers while guiding the beginning teachers' development. Early in their first year, new teachers in SCNTP programs work with their mentors to self-assess on the Continuum of Teacher Development[vii] by comparing their strengths and areas for growth against the benchmarks of the Continuum. Together they develop an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). To be useful, the process of formative assessment must also involve support for improvement, so the ILP includes a set of professional development activities designed to help the novice progress. The mentor helps the beginning teacher move toward these goals by collecting and discussing in-class observation data, co-developing lesson plans, making suggestions, and modeling lessons for the novice to observe.

Working together for two years, the mentor and novice use the ILP to share accountability. Both are responsible for maintaining a goal of high quality teaching, constant professional inquiry, and continuous growth.

The continuity and shared responsibility of this process help the new teacher keep the ups and downs of teaching in perspective. Rather than growing to fear assessment, teachers who work closely with a mentor gain the confidence to accept and implement the suggestions of

their colleagues. As one new teacher in an SCNTP program said, "I meet once a week with my advisor to discuss the inevitable highs and lows.... she is patient and respectful, and I have learned that most of the time I am not so far off the track. What seems like a total derailment to me is just a minor bump. My confidence has grown."

The basis of the mentor-novice interaction is a formative assessment process that includes an Individual Learning Plan and that incorporates:

- clearly articulated standards and goals
- guided, continuous self-assessment
- developmental support linked to all assessment
- shared accountability between novice and mentor

After two years, the novice (always with help from the mentor) puts together a portfolio to document their progress as a teacher, including student work, observation data and lesson plans.

Of equal importance to the assessment value of the portfolio are the benefits of the process itself. Keeping a portfolio compels beginning teachers to focus on the long term and to reflect on what they have learned. It also ensures that they develop self-assessment skills early in their career. As one NTC-supported new teacher put it: "The portfolio cycle has allowed me to move forward, beyond immediate needs. It has had a major impact on me, on my students, and on my collaborative team. It's the difference between being given a fish by my advisor and being taught to fish. Collaboration with an experienced teacher has enabled me to stay focused, to connect areas of practice and to reflect on my progress."

Assessment is not limited, however, to the individual teachers and mentors. Each program should constantly work to assess its own progress, maintaining a dialog between the leadership, the mentors, and the new teachers who are the "customers" of the enterprise.

The most immediate forms of program assessment are surveys and interviews. The SCNTP typically conducts wide-ranging surveys of program participants at mid-year and at the end of the year—collecting data from new teachers, mentors, and principals. The surveys' results are followed up with interviews of as many participants as possible.

The process of gathering feedback serves two goals. Hearing from participants helps to ensure continuous program development, enabling the leadership to respond to the individual needs of the program's constituents. The feedback process also makes participants into stakeholders. When mentors and teachers have a voice in shaping the system, they gain a sense of ownership, and become invested in sustaining the mentoring program in the long term.

Of course, not all program assessment is informal and anecdotal. Long-term statistical studies are also necessary to understand the overall benefits of induction programs. See the section "The Data on Teacher Retention" below for examples of the statistical work being done by the NTC, documenting the impact of induction systems in California and elsewhere.

Mentoring and the Community

At every step, the mentor is a collaborator, not an overseer. Mentors and new teachers work jointly to assess the new teachers' level of practice, and to develop an individual plan to improve their work, including specific training activities and performance goals. But the concept of collaboration goes beyond the mentor-teacher relationship; the practice of reaching out to peers, drawing upon a wide network of support, and building relationships should be inculcated into every new teacher, and become a career-long habit.

Whenever possible, mentors should encourage new teachers to become part of the professional community of the school. For the community to truly support them and meet their needs, novices must learn to make their voices heard. They should feel free to suggest curriculum innovations, new uses for technology, and present their own solutions to day-to-day teaching challenges. After receiving new training, novices benefit from demonstrating the results to other staff members, in meetings or colloquia. New teachers should open their classrooms to visitors, to gain confidence as presenters and to feel assured that their work matters to the entire school community.

An example of such collaborative success is from the Starlight Professional Development School, in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. Starlight students are 90 percent Latino, and two-thirds are ELL. To help meet the community-wide need for bilingual materials, one new teacher worked with her SCNTP mentor to create a multi-cultural literature unit. After sharing the material with the school staff, the new teacher was invited to present her work at a summer biliteracy institute for migrant teachers. This experience of collaboration and communication moved the new teacher to say "I feel that all of us are being trained at this school to be teacher leaders."

Collaboration among peers is also important. New teachers can meet in small groups throughout the year to brainstorm, problem-solve, and discuss issues of content and curriculum. Monthly seminars, organized at the district level and presented by mentor teachers, give new teachers a space to network with each other.

Mentors can also help new teachers expand the concept of collaboration by training them in community relations. Mentors should be available to observe, assess, and model parent/teacher conferences, showing new teachers the ropes in this important real-world aspect of teaching. Those veteran teachers who have worked in diverse communities can show new teachers how to leverage students' multicultural backgrounds as a learning opportunity. Communities are willing to support their teachers, but activating that support takes experience that new teachers have not yet acquired. Connecting the novice to this dynamic source of assistance is a crucial role of the experienced teacher.

This focus on collaboration and community makes induction a "multidimensional" process. The best induction systems are exactly that: systems. They incorporate input from new teachers, veteran teachers, administrators, unions, parents, preservice programs, and the higher educational institutions that will supply the next generation of educators. Communication among these groups is inherently valuable, allowing all the participants in a child's education to provide feedback and support for the new teachers upon which that

education depends. This feedback creates a different cycle, not one of teacher burnout and attrition, but of a cycle of ongoing development and support within the community of educators.

The Data on Teacher Retention

The NTC recently conducted a study on retention rates for those new teachers supported by the SCNTP in 1992-3. The study documented that after seven years, 88 percent of these teachers were still teaching in K-12 classroom. Four other teachers were on leave but planning to return, and five more were employed in administrative positions in education, meaning that a total of 94 percent were still in the field. Among those interviewed, a quarter indicated that the support they had received from the SCNTP was the most important reason they had remained in the profession.[viii]

Another study, this one from outside of California, documented the impact of the NTC induction model in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina. Charlotte-Mecklenburg is an urban district with a student body of more than 100,000. The NTC model was implemented in the most high-priority schools in the district, those in which teacher retention rates were even lower than the district as a whole. The results of this study document that schools in which beginning teachers received weekly mentoring, using the NTC model, found their teacher dropout rates cut almost in half. Whereas attrition rates across the school system hit 32 percent, those with intensive mentoring were at 17.5 percent despite the challenging nature of those sites.

However successful, teacher induction programs require resources. They cost money. So what are the economic benefits of increased teacher retention? Do these benefits justify the expense of induction programs? Weighing recruitment and other training costs against those of induction programs suggests that they do.

When a new teacher leaves the profession, the direct financial costs come from many directions: advertising and hiring, short-term vacancy replacement, and training. Of course, the expense of losing a teacher varies, depending on the nature of the individual school. Unfortunately, schools with the highest recruitment costs are those with the highest turnover rates. In wealthy, suburban schools, recruiting is inexpensive (as low as 15 percent of a teacher's salary) and turnover minimal. Urban schools with a diverse population have higher recruiting expenses (generally 50 percent of a teacher's salary, and 200 percent in some extreme cases),[ix] and turnover tends to be much higher. For obvious reasons, it is the latter schools that benefit the most from induction programs that boost teacher retention.

With its BTSA commitment of roughly $5,700 per new teacher in the 2002-3 school year (a combination of state- and district-level support), California spends far more on teacher retention than any another state. So what does it get for its money? In its 2002 study, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing found that the state has a retention rate of 84 percent after four years, compared to a nationwide rate of 67 percent. To look at the data another way, the nation loses 33 percent of its teachers after four years, California only 16

percent. That is, California only has to replace its beginning teachers at half the rate of the nation as a whole.

The NTC is conducting a survey to establish as precisely as possible the cost benefits of BTSA programs. The results are preliminary, but they allow for some basic observations. In those districts with the highest recruitment costs (50 percent of teacher salary), the cost-benefit of BTSA teacher induction is roughly $2,800 per teacher, based on the 17 percent difference between national and California-wide retention. In districts with low recruitment costs (15 percent), the cost-benefit is much lower, only about $850.

Of course, the above cost-benefits are based only on direct expenses of teacher loss. The NTC is currently expanding its analysis to include all the other economic burdens that result when a new teacher walks away from the profession: the state's initial investment in credentialing, the cost of ongoing professional development, and the impact of teacher experience on student achievement. We estimate that these "hidden" costs of teacher loss are ten times greater than the direct costs of replacing teachers. But the numbers above make one point abundantly clear: induction programs should be implemented first in those districts where they can have the most immediate impact, those with the highest turnover rates and the highest recruitment costs.

Teacher retention is not the only measure of success, and saving money not the only goal of induction. New teachers supported by induction programs shouldn't just be more satisfied in their jobs, but should be better teachers as well. So the NTC is also working to document the impact of quality teacher induction on the students themselves.

Currently, NTC researchers are analyzing a three-year span of SAT-9 reading scores in a unified school district, which has been an SCNTP participant for fifteen years. The scores are broken down into three groups – the students of beginning teachers, mid-career teachers, and experienced teachers – in order to show the effect of teacher experience on the increase of reading scores over the school year. Early results indicate that students of beginning teachers supported by the NTC show test-score increases similar to those of more experienced teachers. This study is not yet conclusive and is being extended to a larger comparison group. In order to chart the impact of various levels of teacher experience over several years, the analysis of the larger group will incorporate an analytical framework based on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.[x]

As mentoring programs take root in districts across the country, they should have an effect at all levels: from monetary savings to standardized test scores, from teacher retention to the professional satisfaction of teachers new and experienced. The NTC is working to document these changes in ways that convince state policy makers to fund and sustain quality induction systems.

Recommendations

Part of the NTC's mission is to work with educational leaders and state policy makers to establish induction programs that work, that are sufficiently funded, and that use tried and

tested methodologies. Here is the checklist that we present as containing the core elements of a quality induction program:

- Full-time program administrators – Programs should be staffed with innovative, full-time program administrators with the training, time, and resources to establish and run excellent programs.
- Quality mentoring – Mentoring should take place during the school day, in-class and one-on-one, with sanctioned time for both mentors and beginning teachers.
- Mentor selection – Mentors should be selected for their ability to work with adults, their expertise in pedagogy and content areas, their leadership qualities, and their commitment to collaborative work.
- Mentor development--Mentors need ongoing training and support to be the most effective "teacher of teachers."
- Formative assessment for beginning teachers – New teachers, with help from their mentors, should systematically identify areas for growth, set personal performance goals, and develop the skills needed to attain these goals.
- Training in data collection and analysis – New teachers and mentors should be trained to collect classroom data, analyze data, and use the results to guide instruction.
- Training for site administrators – Site administrators must understand the needs of beginning teachers, provide them with resources, and learn techniques for evaluation that build teacher practice.
- Teaching standards – New teacher guidance and self-assessment must take into account the accepted state standards for what teachers need to know and be able to do.
- High expectations for new teachers, mentors, and students – Induction programs should be expected to help teachers excel, not just survive.
- Training for work with diverse students and English language learners – Additional support is necessary for areas with minority students and English learners, since beginning teachers are so often placed in schools serving these students.
- Networking and training opportunities for beginning teachers – Workshops and training sessions help novices overcome the traditional isolation of teachers.
- Contractually bargained new teacher placement – Working with teacher unions, policy makers should ensure that new teachers are not routinely placed with the hardest-to-serve students in high-priority schools.

This is not a list from which to pick and choose, but a coherent plan for effective change. All of these elements are important, and each has been shown to support the others, creating a well rounded, robust system that has the capacity to transform the experience of a teacher's first years, and to bring the entire community of educators into the process. The multidimensional aspect of this work – incorporating new and veteran teachers, administrators, unions, and parents – is what makes it truly radical, capable of not only solving a crisis in teacher hiring, but of transforming the culture of education in our country.

Conclusion: A New Dimension of Teaching

Experience has shown that mentoring has an immediate and practical effect on the professional lives of new teachers. Quality induction programs result in greater teacher

retention, breaking the cycle of attrition, which in turn saves money for school districts and ensures that teacher shortages don't dictate hiring policy. These benefits are felt most in those school districts most affected by attrition – those in which students come from backgrounds of poverty and cultural or linguistic diversity, which are in turn the districts with the highest replacement costs.

These results are all good things. But mentoring can have a far more profound effect on our system of education. Mentoring doesn't just help the novice; it also transforms the careers of veteran teachers. Mentors often find themselves revitalized by the experience of passing their knowledge on to a new generation of teachers. Some mentors return to the classroom after a few years and discover that they have gained a broader perspective on teaching and learning. Many become "teacher leaders" in their schools, using the mentoring skills they have learned in an informal capacity, and continue to benefit their community of educators. Other mentors go on to administrative positions using their newly learned leadership skills to become successful principals. Those who enter administration take with them both a well-rounded understanding of new teacher needs and hands-on experience with professional development.

All these benefits have one root cause; mentoring helps transform the profession of teaching from one of isolation and high turnover to one of collaboration, continuity, and community. Learning to teach becomes a process that extends across an entire career, in which training and preservice are only the beginning. Mentoring encourages interaction among generations of teachers, creating an environment in which experience is valued, creativity rewarded, and professional satisfaction life long.

A quality induction system can sustain and nourish that initial enthusiasm of the new teacher on his or her first day. But it can also reinvigorate veteran teachers and can maintain for entire careers that chill down the spine at the sound of the word "teacher."

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